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AU Quick Links

SITE INDEX

▶ prospective students ▶ current students ▶ faculty ▶ forms ▶ general information

GRADUATE ASSISTANT HANDBOOK

(Auburn University reserves the right to change these policies without notice)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose of Graduate Assistantships
Responsibilities of Graduate Assistants
Types of Graduate Assistantships
Administration of Graduate Assistantships
Requirements for Graduate Assistant Appointment
Requirements for Graduate Assistantship Continuation
Requirements for Graduate Assistant Reappointment
Graduate School Calendar
Graduate School Regulations
Graduate School Student Forms
Graduate School Graduate Student Resources
International Students
Financial Aid/ Federal Loans for Graduate Students Tuition Waivers for Graduate Assistants
Graduate Assistant Perks (see also "Tuition Waivers")
Graduate Travel Award Information and Guidelines
Graduate Student Thesis/Dissertation Research Awards
Academic Honesty
Sexual Harassment
Harassment/Discrimination
Students in Need of Psychological Treatment
Grievance Policy
Due Process for Graduate Students
Graduate School Exceptions Policy
Police Harassment
Be Careful: Research Involving Humans
Be Careful: Research Involving Animals

Purpose of Graduate Assistantships

Auburn University's programs of graduate study aim to provide students with a variety of opportunities for professional and scholarly development. Because graduate assistantships give students an opportunity to gain practical experience in teaching, research, or other academic service under the guidance of a faculty member, they can be a significant and challenging avenue for that development. The work experiences of graduate assistants are designed to reinforce and enhance their academic development. Thus service as a graduate assistant presents a dual challenge: those who hold that position are both students and employees. As students, they are expected to concentrate on their studies under the direction of faculty and to make satisfactory progress toward their scholarly or

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professional objectives. As temporary university employees, they are expected to perform their assigned responsibilities within the university's threefold mission of instruction, research, and extension. The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs administers assistantships through the departments. That office may delegate day-to-day responsibility to the Graduate School.

"Programs of graduate study are designed to transform the individual from student to professional scholar. When a graduate assistantship is well conceived and executed, it should serve as an ideal instrument to help facilitate the desired transformation. The primary goal of an assistantship, then, is to facilitate progress toward the graduate degree. Rather than interfere or conflict with the student's educational objective, the assistantship is to aid in the prompt and successful completion of the degree program. While the student assistant makes progress toward an advanced degree, he or she also receives work experience in a profession under the supervision of a faculty mentor.

"The graduate assistant is both student and employee. As a student, the graduate assistant is expected to perform well academically to retain the assistantship. He or she is to be counseled and evaluated regularly by a faculty mentor so as to develop professional skills. As an employee, the graduate assistant is expected to meet teaching, research, and/or administrative obligations. He or she is to work under the supervision of experienced faculty and receive in-service training. In sum, the graduate assistant receives financial support for graduate study by contributing to the teaching and/or research mission of the university. The totality of responsibility may be greater than that required of other students or staff members, but the opportunities for professional development also are greater for the graduate assistant.

"A high proportion of lower-division teaching, and much of the day-to-day research function of the university, is conducted by graduate assistants. Since they play an important role in the educational activities of the institution, they should be given assignments and supervision that will help them to grow professionally. Their graduate studies and assistantship responsibilities should reinforce each other. Research projects, for instance, should lead to a thesis or dissertation. Teaching should give them greater insight into their own performance as students. The mentor relationship is vital, however, in achieving this type of integration. The best graduate assistant experience will evolve from careful planning and monitoring to see that both the students and the university benefit from the relationship.

"The graduate assistantship should be used as a recruiting device to attract highly desired students, including women and minorities. Used effectively, the assistantship can be a tool in the university's equal opportunity/affirmative action program to the benefit of the academic community. It can build confidence in graduate student from diverse backgrounds as it helps them to become better professionals."

Quoted from C. W. Minkel and Mary P. Richards, "A Model Policy for Graduate Assistantship Administration" (Knoxville: Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools, 1983 edition).

Responsibilities of Graduate Assistants

"A fundamental responsibility of the graduate assistant is to work closely with the faculty supervisor in carrying out assigned duties, at the same time making satisfactory progress towards the completion of the degree program. If the student's workload and academic program are properly coordinated, these responsibilities will be compatible. Whether working in a laboratory, classroom,

office, or other setting, the graduate assistant is obligated to maintain standards of academic honesty, integrity, and scientific conduct and to report violations of these to the faculty supervisor. The graduate assistant should keep well informed of departmental, college, and institutional regulations, and follow them consistently.

"The graduate assistant should keep careful [written] records of work assignments so that progress and problems can be fully documented. Recognizing that the assistantship is a temporary position, the graduate assistant should leave records such that decisions can be traced, results verified, and incomplete work finished after the assistant has left the position.

"If problems arise in the work assignment, the graduate assistant should seek help first from the faculty supervisor. Even if the graduate assistant encounters few problems, he or she is responsible for getting the most out of the apprenticeship experience. This means that the graduate assistant, in consultation with the faculty supervisor, should assess the work experience on a continuing basis so as to improve it. The assistant should articulate his or her goals early in the term of appointment and work with the supervisor to achieve them."

Quoted from C. W. Minkel and Mary P. Richards, "A Model Policy for Graduate Assistantship Administration" (Knoxville: Tennessee Conference of Graduate Schools, 1983 edition).

Types of Graduate Assistantships

The following classifications are used:

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) are responsible for laboratories, recitation sections, and, in some cases, regular classes of courses numbered below 6000. GTAs are not permitted to teach courses numbered 6000 or above, though they may assist with laboratories for such courses. Additionally, they may not teach or assist with a course in which they are enrolled. Whatever their instructional responsibilities, GTAs should be supervised by a faculty member who is responsible for monitoring and evaluating their performance. GTAs who have no prior teaching experience should be given some form of training before being allowed to teach. Any GTA with primary responsibility for a course must have a minimum of eighteen semester hours of graduate course credit in that field of instruction.

Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) are responsible for working on research projects in collaboration with or under the direction of a faculty member. That faculty member determines the students' particular responsibilities and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating their performance. Most GRAs are funded through extramural grants and contracts; therefore, the research is often closely tied to the objectives of the grant proposal.

Graduate Extension Assistants (GEAs) are responsible for various kinds of extension work and interaction with the public. The various branches of the Extension Service award these assistantships. A faculty member or extension agent who is responsible for monitoring and evaluating their performance should supervise GEAs.

Graduate Assistants (GAs) are responsible for duties other than teaching, research, or extension. These responsibilities can be varied and could include grading, for example, or work in one of the University libraries or administrative offices. Whatever their responsibilities, GAs should be supervised by a faculty member, administrator, or other appropriate university employee who is responsible for monitoring and evaluating their performance.

Administration of Graduate Assistantships

Appointments to GTAs, GAs, GEAs and, commonly, GRAs are made by the head or chair of the academic department. Faculty members who have grant or contract funds designated for GRAs can suggest candidates for appointment. In any case, department heads, chairs, or their designates are responsible for making formal offers of assistantships in an official letter and for assuring that students receiving offers meet all criteria for appointment. The letter of appointment should provide the following information:

- Type of assistantship being offered (GA, GEA, G R A, or GTA);
- Fraction of full-time work load and length of the appointment;
- Stipend;
- General description of responsibilities;
- Explanation of how to accept the offer;
- Deadline for accepting the offer.

To conform with the requirements of due process, departments should also provide the following information to those receiving assistantship offers, whether through the letter of appointment, a separate document, or a departmental orientation session:

- Evaluation procedures;
- Procedures and criteria for reappointment;
- Conditions under which an assistantship could be terminated.

Departments are encouraged to develop written guides to policies concerning graduate students and assistants. If such a guide is available, it should be forwarded to students before they enroll or distributed to them when they arrive.

At the time it makes initial assistantship offers, each department or unit employing graduate assistants must provide specific departmental policies regarding academic loads. Departments or units must also provide graduate assistants with materials they will need in order to carry out their assigned responsibilities, e.g., textbooks, research equipment, access to computers, etc.

Workloads for graduate assistants are defined on the basis of a normal teaching load or the equivalent time in other duties as determined by each department head or chair and the dean of the school or college in which the assistant is employed. For example, a one-third workload (defined as a 33% FTE or Full-Time Equivalent) is one-third of a normal teaching load. Graduate students may hold multiple assistantships and the assistantships may come from different units on campus, but together they cannot add up to more than a 100 percent appointment. Immigration regulations generally limit international students to a 50 percent maximum (see the section on international students). Individual departments determine maximum course loads (enrollments) for graduate assistants. It is recommended that graduate students working more than half time not carry a full academic load. Graduate students enrolled in academic degree programs are guided by plans of study approved by their major professors/advisors. Each plan of study includes but is not limited to didactic course work that addresses the requirements established by the Graduate Faculty for each graduate degree program. For thesis and dissertation students, the plan of study also includes research/thesis and research/dissertation hours that reflect the academic research requirements for the degree program and the involvement of the faculty in working with the students in mastering those requirements. Accordingly, requirements that graduate students register for hours not included in the plan of study as

a condition of employment or to enhance credit hour production for administrative purposes are inappropriate. Similarly, requiring hours on the plan of study beyond the degree requirements established by the Graduate Faculty for such administrative purposes is also inappropriate unless the additional requirements are required by University policy.

Teaching assistantships are generally offered for a period of nine months and research assistantships for a period of twelve months. Factors such as fluctuating course enrollment and variations in extramural funding can dictate other periods of appointment, however.

Requirements for Graduate Assistant Appointment

To be eligible for appointment to any sort of graduate assistantship, students must meet all of the following conditions:

- They must qualify for admission to the Graduate School of Auburn University (see <http://www.grad.auburn.edu/ps/admissions.html>)
- They must submit, when applying, official transcripts of college credits to the Graduate School;
- They must be enrolled in the Graduate School of Auburn University by the beginning of the semester in which the assistantship is to commence and must be registered for at least one course during each semester of the appointment;
- They should possess an undergraduate degree with substantial work in the field involved in the appointment, they should be devoting full-time efforts toward the degree, they should have achieved, and should continue to maintain, an excellent academic record and they should be studying for an advanced degree in the field to which they are appointed or in a closely-related field in which they have substantial background;
- They must receive final approval of their appointment to an assistantship from the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Students who are not native speakers of English must also demonstrate competence in spoken English before being appointed to a GTA or undertaking any other teaching responsibilities. Specifically, such students must receive acceptable evaluations after at least two of the following examinations:

- The Test of Spoken English (TSE) administered by the Educational Testing Service, with an acceptable score of 50 or better.
- Evaluation by the Department of Communication Disorders, through its Speech and Hearing Clinic.
- Evaluation by a representative or committee in the student's department.

Compliance with these requirements is the responsibility of the hiring department. If such students have tentatively been offered assistantships but have not passed at least two of the exams above, the offers must be suspended until they have done so, or they must be given assignments that do not require spoken English in a teaching situation.

International students should not be eligible to apply for a teaching assistantship until they have completed at least a term of graduate work. Their knowledge of the specific field in which they may work as a graduate assistant, and their command of the English language to a degree appropriate to the demands of the assignment, should be evaluated thoroughly by faculty supervisors before an award is made. Under no circumstances should international students be employed as teaching assistants until

they have served a period of special apprenticeship. International graduate students must comply with all university, local, state, and federal regulations including but not limited to visas, International Student Fees, health insurance requirements, employment, curriculum changes, and other requirements that may arise. International students need to consult with the Office of International Education for details concerning all aspects of International Education at Auburn University.

Requirements for Continuance of a Graduate Assistantship

To be on assistantship, a graduate student must be in a degree-seeking program. The student must be registered in the OASIS classification of MST, EDS, PHD, EDD, GPR or GND.

To be on assistantship, graduate students must be registered for at least one course (anything carrying an Auburn University course number) during each academic term of the assistantship.

To be on assistantship, a graduate student must be making consistent and satisfactory progress toward the degree.

International graduate students on F1 visas cannot hold a greater than 50 percent work appointment. International graduate students on F2 visas cannot hold a work appointment. Rules for summer terms are different. Please check with the International Education office in Hargis Hall.

Graduate students may hold multiple assistantships and the assistantships may come from different units on campus, but together they cannot add up to more than a 100 percent appointment. Multiple assistantships for international graduate students cannot add up to more than a 50 percent work appointment.

To be on assistantship, a graduate student must be making consistent and satisfactory progress toward the degree.

Requirements for Graduate Assistant Reappointment

Graduate assistant appointments are temporary. Continuation depends upon availability of funds, level of enrollment, and research needs. Salaries are paid in accordance with the budget policies and payroll procedures of the University. The Board of Trustees is obligated to pay certain fixed charges against the institution and thereafter pay salaries in full insofar as funds are available. If for any reason beyond the control of the Board of Trustees funds are not available, salaries will be prorated. Each graduate assistant must be in a degree-seeking program and registered in the classification of MST, EDS, PHD, EDD, GPR or GND. The student also must be registered for at least one course (during each academic term of the assistantship), must satisfy the minimum course load specifications of the individual departments and must be making satisfactory progress toward the degree.

In order to be considered for reappointment, those holding assistantships must have maintained a grade-point average of at least 3.0 on all course work, and received acceptable evaluations from their supervisor. If the student's GPA falls below 3.0, there is a grace period of the next nine hours of graduate enrollment during which the student must raise the GPA back to that minimum level or lose the assistantship. Assistants eligible to be considered for reappointment should be notified of the department's decision, in writing, by 15 June if at all possible, preceding the next academic year. For

assistantships not tied to the academic calendar, reasonable written notice of reappointment decisions should also be given.

To be on assistantship, a graduate student must be making consistent and satisfactory progress toward the degree.

Important Web Links

Graduate School Calendar: http://www.auburn.edu/main/auweb_calendar.html

Graduate School Regulations: http://web6.duc.auburn.edu/student_info/bulletin_01-02/graduate.pdf

Graduate School Student Forms: http://www.grad.auburn.edu/site_index.html#forms

Graduate School Graduate Student Resources: http://www.grad.auburn.edu/site_index.html#cs

International Students

International graduate students must comply with all university, local, state, and federal regulations including but not limited to visas, International Student Fees, health insurance requirements, employment, curriculum changes, and other requirements that may arise. International students need to consult with the Office of International Education for details concerning all aspects of International Education at Auburn University. International graduate students on F1 visas cannot hold a greater than 50 percent work appointment. Certain exceptions are allowed. Please contact the Office of International Education. International graduate students on F2 visas cannot hold a work appointment. Multiple assistantships for international graduate students cannot add up to more than a 50 percent work appointment. International graduate teaching assistants who are assigned to scheduled lecture or laboratory sections must first be certified in spoken English proficiency. Certification may be attained through a minimum score of 50 on the Test of Spoken English (TSE) offered by the Educational Testing Service or approval by the director of the English as a Second Language Program (ESL). Applicants who hold a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution whose instruction is in English may be exempted from this requirement.

Students who are not native speakers of English must also demonstrate competence in spoken English before being appointed to a GTA or undertaking any other teaching responsibilities. Specifically, such students must receive acceptable evaluations after at least two of the following examinations:

- The Test of Spoken English (TSE) administered by the Educational Testing Service, with an acceptable score of 50 or better.
- Evaluation by the Department of Communication Disorders, through its Speech and Hearing Clinic.
- Evaluation by a representative or committee in the student's department.

Compliance with these requirements is the responsibility of the hiring departments. If such students have tentatively been offered assistantships but have not passed at least two of the exams

above, the offers must be suspended until they have done so, or they must be given assignments that do not require spoken English in a teaching situation.

International students should not be eligible to apply for an assistantship until they have completed at least a term of graduate work. Their knowledge of the specific field in which they may work as a graduate assistant, and their command of the English language to a degree appropriate to the demands of the assignment, should be evaluated thoroughly by faculty supervisors before an award is made. Under no circumstances should international students be employed as teaching assistants until they have served a period of special apprenticeship. International graduate students must comply with all university, local, state, and federal regulations including but not limited to visas, International Student Fees, health insurance requirements, employment, curriculum changes, and other requirements with may arise. International students need to consult with the Office of International Education for details concerning all aspects of International Education at Auburn University.

Financial Aid/ Federal Loans for Graduate Students

Of the six types of graduate students, MST, EDS, PHD, EDD, GPR, and GND, only the first four (MST, EDS, PHD, and EDD) are eligible for federal loans or financial aid. See also http://web6.duc.auburn.edu/student_info/bulletin_01-02/financial.pdf

Tuition Waivers for Graduate Assistants

Auburn University has a program to provide in-state tuition fellowships to Graduate Teaching Assistants and Graduate Research Assistants. Those graduate students with fellowships pay no tuition, although a \$200 enrollment fee is charged.

Fellowships are administered through the Graduate School and allocated to the colleges and schools for use in programs identified as areas of existing or emerging emphasis consistent with published institutional goals. There is no application process associated with this program. All contact and any questions concerning eligibility and availability should be directed to specific academic departments or the deans' offices of the respective academic colleges or schools.

Fellowship recipients are designated Graduate Teaching Fellows or Graduate Research Fellows and are expected to present graduate credentials placing them at the top of all graduate students in the academic unit. Fellowships must be renewed yearly and shall not exceed four calendar years' duration for doctoral students and two calendar years' duration for master's students. Fellowship recipients must hold a concurrent graduate teaching or research assistantship and must maintain a course workload consistent with policies governing graduate teaching assistants and graduate research assistants within the academic unit. The concurrent assistantship must extend, at a minimum, from the eighth class day of each semester to the last day of classes of each semester. Annual renewal of a fellowship beyond the initial year is contingent upon a high level of academic performance, excellent performance as a graduate teaching or research assistant, and satisfactory progress toward the degree as certified by the appropriate academic dean.

All non-resident graduate assistants may receive a waiver of the non-resident portion of tuition if on at least a 25 percent graduate assistantship and if paid no less than \$406 per month (for FY2002). This dollar figure is adjusted yearly during the budget process. Waivers are available only to graduate assistantships assigned for an entire semester, defined as beginning no later than the eighth class day

each semester and ending no earlier than the last day of classes each semester.

Non-Alabama resident graduate assistants who have been on assistantship for at least two consecutive semesters will automatically have their out-of-state tuition waived for the next semester whether or not they are on assistantship that semester. The "next" semester is defined as the next calendar semester. For example, a graduate student on 25 percent or higher assistantship for consecutive fall and spring semesters will still have the out-of-state tuition waived if registered summer semester whether the student is on assistantship or not that summer semester. If the student were not to enroll the summer semester in this example, but were to enroll the following fall semester, this benefit would not apply because fall would not be the next calendar semester. Graduate assistants must request this benefit from the Office of the Bursar.

All graduate assistants registered for at least one hour are exempt from FICA and Medicare (Section 218 of the Social Security Act). Graduate assistants who meet the requirements for GRAD7900 Thesis Completion or GRAD8900 Dissertation Completion and register concurrently for at least one hour of Research and Thesis/Research and Dissertation are considered full-time students and are exempt from FICA and Medicare on graduate assistant stipends.

Graduate Assistant Perks (see also "Tuition Waivers")

Graduate assistants at Auburn University currently enjoy the following privileges (the first three privileges are also enjoyed by all graduate students):

- Eligibility to apply for travel funds administered by the Graduate School;
- Extended time limits for payment of fees and other assessments through a four-cycle billing process;
- Eligibility for membership in the Auburn University Federal Credit Union;
- Waiver of non-resident fees for a one-fourth time or greater appointment. Some restrictions apply; see "Tuition waivers."

In general, graduate assistants should have the privilege of being treated as professionals-in-training in their chosen fields of study. As such, they should be provided with resources and facilities sufficient to let them meet the responsibilities of their appointment. All graduate assistants should receive appropriate space in which to perform their duties. Departments should supply GTAs, in particular, with copies of textbooks and other teaching materials related to the courses in which they are assisting. Similarly, departments employing GRAs should supply them with materials and equipment required for their research projects or other activities. Graduate assistants of other kinds should also have access to appropriate materials and facilities.

Graduate Travel Award Information and Guidelines

Purpose and Scope of Awards . The intent of Graduate Travel Awards is to provide partial travel support for students presenting research results at domestic and international professional meetings. First priority is given to those students presenting results of thesis or dissertation research. Limited funds prohibit support for fieldwork or meetings (e.g. conferences, workshops, etc.) where student research results are not being presented.

Extent of Awards . Submission of an application does not guarantee that an award will be granted.

Individual travel awards will range from a minimum of \$50 to a maximum of \$500. Criteria that will be considered include priority designation (criteria established by Graduate Fellowship Committee) of the meeting and availability of funds from other sources.

Regulations . The following regulations should be carefully considered before submitting an application for a Graduate Travel Award:

- For travel in North America, a student is eligible to receive a maximum of \$500 during his/her degree program. A doctoral student is eligible to receive \$1000 during his/her degree program (up to \$500 per year). Students may apply for an additional amount of \$500 for travel outside North America. Students who have already received the maximum amount for a degree program should not apply. Indicate previous award dates, degree, and amounts on the application form.

- Individuals may submit only one application per review period.

Review Periods and Deadlines . Applications are reviewed monthly. The Graduate School must receive them by the first of the month prior to the month of travel. For example, applications for travel that begins in October are due on September 1.

- Students will be notified approximately two weeks after the deadline by mail to the address indicated on the application.

- Students have seven working days upon return to submit travel documents and receipts to the Department or Graduate School. Students should receive reimbursement within one month after receipt of travel documents and receipts by the Graduate School. If you have not received payment within this time frame contact the Graduate School (844-4700).

Application Procedure . Graduate Travel Award application forms can be obtained from the Graduate School and the Graduate School Web Page. All items of the form (including signatures) must be completed. An abstract of the presentation must be affixed to the form. The original AND one copy should be delivered to the Graduate School, Hargis Hall. To be considered for funding, the completed application form must be received by the deadlines indicated above. Incomplete applications will not be processed.

Administration of Funds . Awards are made in the form of reimbursement for travel and related expenses. Awards cannot be distributed in advance of travel. Those who receive awards will be sent instructions regarding reimbursement at the time of award notification.

Graduate Student Thesis/Dissertation Research Awards

Purpose and Scope of Awards . The intent of Graduate Student Research Awards is to provide partial support for thesis and dissertation research. As such, these awards may be used to help support the purchase of materials and equipment necessary for data collection or for travel (within or outside the United States) for the purpose of conducting research. Awards will not be made to cover stipends. The Graduate Student Fellowship Committee encourages students from all areas of graduate study to participate in this program.

Extent of Awards . The maximum award amount is \$1,000. Students are encouraged to obtain

matching funds from their department and/or college, but such funds are not required.

Application Procedure . Application forms can be obtained from the Graduate School, or the Graduate School web page. A complete application package will include the following:

Award application form as a cover page (with appropriate signatures); a one (1) page curriculum vita; and a proposal of no more than four (4) typed pages addressing all 13 items on the attached page (address items 7-13 as briefly as possible.) The complete package (application form, vita page, and materials addressing the 13 criteria) must be submitted in ten (10) complete, stapled sets to the Graduate School. Application materials can be single spaced, but must have one inch margins on all sides, with type no smaller than 12 characters per inch. Applications that do not follow these instructions precisely will not be considered. When writing your proposal, consider that a review panel composed of individuals with diverse academic backgrounds will evaluate it.

Review Period and Deadline . One Research Award competition will be held each year. The project period begins when the award is announced and ends a year later. The deadline for 2002 is March 22, 2002.

Criteria for Evaluating Applications . (1) Scientific/Scholarly/Creative: Significance of the project: originality; creativity; potential contribution to one's field. (2) Knowledge of Project Subject: Evidence of a thorough review of pertinent literature and clear understanding of the area of research. (3) Project Objectives: Clear statement of the project objectives. (4) Methods and Procedures: Clear statement of the procedures to be used. (5) Budget: Clearly defined and measurable budget.

Administration of Funds . A budget transfer will be made from the Graduate School to the appropriate departmental account. A report of expenditures is required at the end of the grant period. Expenditures should match the proposed budget.

Academic Honesty

See Easy Reporting Guide:

http://web6.duc.auburn.edu/tigercub/rules/rules_student_discipline.pdf and the honor code, page 20, of <http://web6.duc.auburn.edu/tigercub/rules/Code%20of%20Laws%2010-27-03.pdf>.

Sexual Harassment

See page 6 of http://web6.duc.auburn.edu/tigercub/rules/rules_student_discipline.pdf.

Harassment/Discrimination

See page 6 of http://web6.duc.auburn.edu/tigercub/rules/rules_student_discipline.pdf.

Students in Need of Psychological Treatment

See page 5 of http://web6.duc.auburn.edu/tigercub/rules/rules_student_discipline.pdf.

Grievance Policy

In addition to their rights as students at Auburn University, all graduate assistants have certain other rights as assistants. First, they have the right to receive written notification of all decisions, actions, or contingencies that will affect their assistantship. For example, they should receive in advance an account of the procedures by which they will be evaluated as assistants. They should also receive notice of reappointment procedures well in advance, so that they can prepare their requests or applications.

Second, graduate students have the right to seek a resolution of assistantship-related grievances through the Graduate Assistants Grievance Policy described below. As students, all graduate assistants also have the right to seek redress of academic grievances through the Student Academic Grievance Policy, which is printed annually in The Tiger Cub (See http://web6.duc.auburn.edu/tigercub/rules/rules_student-academic.pdf). Since the duties of many graduate assistants are intertwined with their academic work, those who believe that they have a grievance should carefully consider which process to initiate. The process outlined here for graduate assistants applies only to grievances arising specifically from their work as graduate assistants.

Purpose : The Graduate Assistant Grievance Policy is not designed to encourage or provide for formal adjudication of differences or to create a bureaucracy of review. Instead, the policy is intended to provide a fair and uniform set of guidelines by which the grievances of graduate assistants may be heard and resolved. All grievances should be resolved at the lowest possible administrative level and in the most equitable way. While those seeking redress of grievances have the right of appeal to successive levels of administration, they should recognize that the more formal the review, the more certainly they must bear the burden of proof.

Process : Before filing a grievance, graduate assistants should first inform their immediate academic advisor or supervisor of the problem and seek his or her help in solving it. If necessary, the assistant may then appeal to the program director or department head or chair for help. Only if a satisfactory resolution of the problem cannot be achieved at these levels should an assistant appeal to a higher one. If the problem cannot be resolved at the department level or if the nature of the problem or the personalities involved would make it too awkward or embarrassing to begin the grievance process at that level, the assistant may present the grievance to the academic dean or, in a unit without an academic dean, to other appropriate administrative officer(s). If the problem cannot be resolved there, the student may appeal to the Provost or designate, whose decision is final. At every level of consideration, the assistant is entitled to fair and impartial review. Those considering the grievance should make every effort to act with proper regard to the graduate assistant's welfare and confidentiality, as well as to sound academic policy.

The grievance process outlined here is part of the way in which an academic community organizes its life. Consequently, although students seeking redress of grievances are encouraged to seek counsel and support from those within the University, the intrusion of external legal counsel into this internal academic process is inappropriate.

Finally, just as assistants may encounter problems in carrying out their duties, so they may become the subject of complaints or grievances brought by others. When the assistant's supervisor, academic advisor, or department head or chair receives such complaints, the graduate assistant has the right to receive prompt notification and to be offered the opportunity to respond to the complaint, presenting evidence in defense. Here, too, the burden of proof should rest on the person making the complaint.

Due Process for Graduate Students

The student's advisory committee monitors each graduate student's progress toward a degree, and issues of professional and personal development may be considered. While failure to maintain academic standards merits automatic dismissal, a student also may be dropped from the Graduate School if progress is unsatisfactory in other areas.

In such cases, the advisory committee will prepare a statement of grievance and discuss it in a meeting with the student. The statement must have the unanimous support of all members of the committee. The student will be warned that corrective measures must be taken within a specified time to avoid action that might result in dismissal. The committee determines the period allowed for correction. Copies of the statement of grievance and summary of the meeting will be provided the student, the department head or chair, the academic dean, and the graduate dean.

If the deficiency is not corrected within the time allowed by the committee, a statement reiterating the grievance and recommending dismissal should be sent to the graduate dean with copies to the student, the department head or chair, and the academic dean.

The graduate dean will give the student an opportunity to respond and will make a final determination. The student and the advisory committee will be notified.

The action taken will not appear on the student's official transcript, and release of information is restricted under the University's policy on the confidentiality of student records.

Graduate School Exceptions Policy

Graduate School policies are enumerated in the Auburn University Bulletin (see <http://www.auburn.edu/bulletin>.) Exceptions may be made to policies of the Graduate School under special circumstances. A person wishing to request an exception should write a letter to the dean of the Graduate School stating the nature of the request and the reasons for it. If a student is making the request, the letter should be submitted first to the major professor, who will write a letter of recommendation. Both letters go to the department head or chair. If a member of the faculty is making the request, the letter goes to the department head or chair, who will write a letter of recommendation. In all cases, requests for exceptions must have the approval of three members of the department's Graduate Faculty as well as the department head or chair. All letters go to the academic dean for approval. Letters and comments then are forwarded to the dean of the Graduate School. A request for an extension of time to meet degree requirements must be justified. It must be accompanied by a proposed schedule for completion and assurance that the student is current in subjects included in the plan of study.

Police Harassment

Any student who feels they have been harassed, threatened or otherwise mistreated by any officer (s) of the Auburn University Police Department should appear in person at the AUPD located on Donahue Drive and complete a form detailing their grievance as soon after any such alleged incident has taken place.

Be Careful: Research Involving Humans

Auburn University established the Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) to evaluate research for compliance with the guidelines and policies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Public Health Service, the Food and Drug Administration and other federal, state and local regulations. All research in which human subjects are used, whether by faculty, staff or students, must be approved in advance by the IRB, regardless of the source of funding, lack of funding or any other consideration. Research involving human subjects not approved in advance may be disallowed and may incur severe penalties for non-compliance with institutional policy. Information and review forms may be obtained from the Administrator for Special Programs, 307D Samford Hall (334) 844-5966.

Be Careful: Research Involving Animals

Auburn University's Animal Resources Program requires compliance with the Animal Welfare Assurance negotiated with the Office of Protection from Research Risks/National Institutes of Health (OPRR/NIH). A major part of that Assurance involves the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) that ensures compliance with the Assurance, the policies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and all other federal, state and local regulations concerning care, treatment and use of animals. All activities, whether teaching, research, production or display of animals, and whether or not the activity is funded, must be approved in advance by the committee. The use of animals for any purpose that is not approved in advance by the IACUC may involve severe penalties for non-compliance with institutional policy and could jeopardize the University's Animal Welfare Assurance filed with the OPRR and the NIH. Information may be obtained from the Director of Animal Resources, (334) 844-5667.



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